

A SHORT WALK IN THE WOODS

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - DAY

Sunlight pierces through thick green leaves. Cicadas hum. Our HIKER (59), a bit weathered but determined, pushes through thick foliage.

HIKER (V.O.)

It was near a hundred degrees, and the humidity wrapped around me like wet wool. Sweat poured from my hat like a leaky faucet.

He pauses, gasping, leaning heavily on two trekking poles. He is drenched in sweat, it rolls off his broad-brimmed hat like a leaky faucet. Drip, drip, drip.

HIKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I marveled and despaired at how much water I was losing. But I'm close to the summit. I can finally see sky peeking through the trees. Just a little farther.

He pushes forward.

EXT. SUMMIT CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

The Hiker stumbles into a clearing ringed by gnarled pines and mountain laurel. He drops his pack, panting, collapsing to his knees.

HIKER (V.O.)

A few years ago, I puffed like this walking from the bed to the bathroom.

He steps to the edge of the overlook and gazes out at the rolling, quilted countryside. In the distance, a red barn.

HIKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Three thousand feet up and five miles from the nearest nearest road. Not a soul in sight.

He weeps, quietly, spent from the exertion.

HIKER

(yelling)

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

The barbaric yelp ends. No echo. It's just swallowed up.

EXT. RIDGE LINE CAMP SPOT - EVENING

The Hiker strips off his shirt and pants and wrings them out. Water STREAMS from the shirt.

He pulls out cooking gear and lays it on a flat patch of earth, pulls out a small stove, checks his nearly empty

water bottle.

HIKER (V.O.)
One pint of water. Fifty
milliliters of gin. No streams for
miles. If things got worse... maybe
I could cook the pasta in sweat.

Pulling a large pot from his pack, it slips from his hands and falls to the ground spilling out a GUN, half wrapped in a dish towel.

He grimaces.

Picking up the gun, he reflexively checks the safety, wipes the gun down, re-wraps it in the towel and places it back in his pack.

Later he wanders to the side of the trail and picks WILD BERRIES, collecting them into a CLEAN SOCK.

HIKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Maybe I could make oatmeal in the
morning out of berry juice... if I
squeezed hard enough...

CRACK! A branch SNAPS. The Hiker stiffens.

He looks down the trail.

HIKER
(softly)
God, I hope it's a bear.

He glances at his shorts are still hanging from a tree.

He limps toward them. A pink blur bounces up the trail.

HIKER
(loudly)
Could you give me a moment to put
my pants on?

VOICE (O.S)
It's all good!

Laughter. He fumbles with his shorts, hopping on one foot trying to step into his shorts.

Two red-and-white TREKKING POLES poke into view.

A WOMAN (30s), sprightly and glowing with sweat, emerges around a gnarled pine. She's wearing a pink RILAKKUMA HAT, an unnecessary sports bra, periwinkle running shorts, and boots with rolled-down socks like doughnuts.

She grins at him as she steps to the overlook, then looks out, panting, and says to the great expanse...

WOMAN
(nodding)
I get it.

She turns to the hiker.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Getting to the top. It's quite...
Cathartic.

She stares at him. Her eyes are blue.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
I thought I was the only one up
here.

HIKER
Me, too.

They stare at each other, awkwardly. The woman breaks the
silence.

WOMAN
Do you have anything to eat? I
severely underestimated caloric
intake on this hike.

HIKER
Yeah. You're lucky I'm
over-prepared.

He digs out two trail bars, offers one.

WOMAN
Thank you!

HIKER
You're welcome to share my
fettuccine if you have a couple of
cups of water. I severely
underestimated how much I'd sweat.
I'm down to my last pint.

He shows her the bottle like treasure.

WOMAN
Deal.

She twists, showing off her bright orange CAMELBAK.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Water. I have lots of. Food. Not so
much.

EXT. CAMP - LATER

The Hiker lays out his tarp and pads. The Woman disappears
behind a tree.

WOMAN (O.S.)

I wish I'd brought another shirt.

HIKER

You can borrow mine.

The woman steps into view, naked save for boots and a hat. She nonchalantly begins hanging damp clothes on tree limbs. He hands her his shirt.

She takes it and slips it on. It hangs long on her.

EXT. CAMPFIRE STOVE - DUSK

They sit across from each other. The pot on the stove bubbles. He tries carving a fork from a twig.

Fails.

They eat straight from the pot, passing the spoon back and forth.

HIKER (V.O.)

We didn't ask names. Or where we were from. We talked about how the woods closed in on us. How the land looked like a patchwork quilt.

EXT. TREE LINE | LATER

The Hiker hangs the food bag far from camp. Returning, he eyes the shadows.

HIKER

Any bear that can get to it is welcome to it.

WOMAN

As long as the bear leaves us alone.

EXT. SLEEPING AREA - NIGHT

They lean back against their packs. Wind whistles through the trees. They fade into sleep.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Pitch black. The stars burn like pinpricks. A SLIVER OF MOON glows.

The Hiker awakes. His companion is curled beside him on the sleeping pad.

He gently unzips the sleeping bag and pulls it over them both.

She shifts, rests her head on his chest.

PPFFFT. She farts. She settles in and begins to snore softly.

HIKER (V.O.)
We were both veterans of the
blanket wars.

Over the course of the night the hiker pulls the sleeping bag over the woman... she overheats, pushes it off... then pulls it back over him. They toss it back and forth all night.

EXT. CAMP - DAWN

He wakes. The sky is soft gray. ORANGE glows on the horizon.

He turns to find the woman sitting on the overlook, boots set beside her. His aquamarine shirt folded neatly on top.

She moves slowly, fluidly. A quiet sculpture of strength framed by pines and mountain laurel in a crescent moon yoga pose silhouetted against the increasing glow of the rising sun.

BEEP. BEEP. His alarm sounds and breaks the stillness.

He fumbles to shut it off. She looks at him. He bundles the sleeping bag awkwardly over his lap.

HIKER
(laughing awkwardly)
I have oatmeal. And blueberries.

She laughs, eyes bright.

WOMAN (O.S.)
I'll get the food bag while you
get... Organized.

The woman disappears down the trail.

EXT. CAMPFIRE STOVE - LATER

Water boils. Oatmeal cooks. He stirs in the berries.

They sit close, passing one spoon back and forth.

HIKER (V.O.)
The blueberries turned the oatmeal
gray. But we scraped the pot clean.

EXT. CAMP - LATER

They pack in silence. She folds the shirt, offers it back.

HIKER
Please, keep it.

WOMAN

(gesturing with the
shirt)

Thank you. And for the food.

HIKER

Thank you. For the water.

She shoulders her pack, raises a hand in farewell.

She turns down the trail, pink hat bouncing, poles clacking,
socks like doughnuts. And then his aquamarine t-shirt melts
into the foliage.

HIKER (V.O.)

I thought I might chase after her.
But I didn't

He lifts his pack, turns in the opposite direction, and
walks without looking back.

FADE OUT

THE END